

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 161354

FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 17697 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ADDIS ABABA
KHARTOUM MOGADISCIO ASMARA LONDON NAIROBI JIDDA CAIRO JUL 08

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 17697

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, FT, FR

SUBJECT: QUAI REFLECTIONS ON TFAI

REF: PARIS 13672 (NOTAL)

1. IN CONVERSATION JULY 7, QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR
AFRICA COMBAL MADE OBEISANCE TO "UNCHANGED" OFFICIAL
POLICY TOWARDS THE TFAI, I.E., FRANCE WILL FOLLOW THE
"POPULAR WILL" IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE
TERRITORY, AND THEN PROCEEDED TO DISCUSS CURRENT
CONDITIONS WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR MARKEDLY ALTER-
ING FRENCH POLICY THERE.

2. COMBAL NOTED THAT THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT, AT ITS
OWN INITIATIVE, HAD RECENTLY SENT MISSIONS TO A NUMBER
OF AFRICAN AND ARAB COUNTRIES. THE PURPOSE OF THESE
MISSIONS WAS TO EXPLAIN WHY ALI AREF'S GOVERNMENT,
WHILE DESIRING EVENTUAL TFAI INDEPENDENCE, DOES NOT
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WISH TO PRESS THE ISSUE NOW. COMBAL SAID THAT EVEN THE
MOST CONSERVATIVE AFRICAN-ARAB LEADERS TOLD THE MISSIONS
THAT THEY COULD NOT, GIVEN OAU AND ARAB LEAGUE POLICIES,
SUPPORT ANYTHING LESS THAN IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE FOR

THE TERRITORY. HE IMPLIED THAT ALI AREF'S FOLLOWERS, SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK BY THIS RESPONSE, HAVE BEGUN SERIOUSLY TO REEXAMINE THEIR OWN POSITIONS. THE FACT THAT THE MODERATE FRENCH PRESS, TOO, IS CALLING FOR

EARLY INDEPENDENCE WILL ALSO AFFECT OPINION IN DJIBOUTI AND IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, COMBAL ADDED.

3. BEFORE ANY CHANGE OF STATUS CAN BE MADE, COMBAL CONTINUED, THE PEOPLE OF THE TFAI MUST AGREE BOTH THAT THEY WANT INDEPENDENCE AND ON AN ACCEPTABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT. ALI AREF IS DEFINITELY PERSONNA NON GRATA TO THE ISSAS. SHOULD THE INHABITANTS, AS NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY, SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS, THE NEXT QUESTION WOULD BE ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALI ACQUIESCENCE IN AN INDEPENDENT TFAI.

4. COMBAL THOUGHT THAT THE ONLY POSSIBILITY OF SUCH ACCEPTANCE (AND HE WAS HIGHLY DUBIOUS THAT SOMALIA WOULD EVER REALLY ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION OTHER THAN THE INCORPORATION OF THE TFAI) WAS IN A LARGER FRAMEWORK. HE OBSERVED THAT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT AND EVEN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN, WANT STABILITY IN THE AREA AND MIGHT BE ABLE USEFULLY TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE PARTIES. FURTHER AFIELD, BOTH THE OAU AND THE ARAB LEAGUE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE, HE SPECULATED.

5. CURRENTLY BESET BY COMORIAN INDEPENDENCE PROBLEMS, COMBAL DESCRIBED THEM AS NOTHING COMPARED WITH DJIBOUTI, THE FUTURE STABILITY OF WHICH IS OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO WESTERN INTERESTS IN THE HORN AND THE MIDDLE EAST. IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS STRATEGIC INTEREST THAT FRANCE HOPES SOMEHOW TO MAINTAIN A BASE AT

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DJIBOUTI.

6. ON A MORE HOPEFUL NOTE, COMBAL DOUBTED THAT A CHANGE IN THE STATUS QUO IS IMMINENT. HE BELIEVED THAT THE QUESTION OF TFAI INDEPENDENCE WOULD NOT BE PRESSED AT THIS YEAR'S UNGA. HOWEVER, HE CONCLUDED, TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO SOLVE THIS INTRACTABLE PROBLEM.

7. COMMENT: THE RETHINKING ON THE TFAI DESCRIBED IN THE REFERENCE IS PICKING UP SPEED.
RUSH UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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